

GAMEDAYGUIDE

www.kstatecollegian.com | Friday, November 11, 2011 | K-State vs. Texas A&M

RESET

Wildcats look to build off last week’s performance

Sean Frye
staff writer

Last week, the K-State Wildcats posted 45 points against the Oklahoma State Cowboys, their second best showing of the year. Quarterback Collin Klein also put up his best passing performance of the year, airing it out for 231 yards.

However, the Wildcats still lost in heartbreaking fashion, as Klein’s pass into the end zone on the final play of the game fell to the turf. Now the Wildcats are the victims of two straight losses, and an impressive offensive showing will be crucial if they want to get the season back on the track it was on two weeks ago.

“We are just trying to get ourselves better and that is the consistency of it,” said head coach Bill Snyder. “Whether it was a win or a loss, regardless of what your record is, the bottom line is, if you want to be a better team, you have to practice to get better.”

As it has been in nearly every game this year, Klein’s leadership will be pivotal to the offense’s success this week. Klein is one of the toughest quarterbacks in the country, and it showed yet again last week, as both his arms were covered in blood at one point as he led multiple comeback attempts against a team that is in line to play for a national title.

“Collin is a very, very tough young guy,” Snyder said, “but we have a lot of guys that take hits, and so does everybody else. You have got running backs in the conference that run the ball 25 times a game and they get hit the same way. That is just the nature of the game, and I think that Collin handles it as well as anybody.”

In addition to his toughness, Klein has also developed as a legitimate passing threat as the season has progressed. He will look to continue that trend this week against the country’s worst pass defense in Texas A&M.

“I believe he has improved,” Snyder said. “We’d like to have balance in our offense. We run the ball with a certain degree of success and we can enhance that by being a little more effective in the passing game. Hopefully we’ll be able to retain that balance. I think Collin has always been confident in his ability to throw the ball.”

One thing that has helped Klein develop his passing game has been the emergence of wide receiver Tyler Lockett, who has become one of Klein’s favorite targets.



Chris Harper, a junior wide receiver, looks upfield after a catch. Harper finished the game with five receptions and 55 yards against the Cowboys.

Lockett hauled in the lone touchdown catch against the Cowboys and was also the intended receiver of Klein’s last-second pass attempt to tie the game.

“Well, I never thought about how fast he would or would not progress,” Snyder said. “I know there was a lot of dialogue in regards to visiting with his parents whether he would play this year or have him take a redshirt. The thought that we would put him on the field instead of redshirting him would maybe indicate that he would play well, but I did not have any projections on how well he would play.”

While schematically, the Wildcats will likely attack through the air on Saturday, the offense ultimately wants to get past the previous two games, which resulted in the team’s first and second losses of the year.

“As far as the reset button goes, you have to hit it every week,” said offensive lineman BJ Finney. “You just have to keep yourself mentally focused on who you have to prepare for. Once you get home from the previous game, or when the previous



Quarterback Collin Klein and wide receiver Chris Harper discuss a play while the defense is on the field.

game is over, you have to hit the reset button to focus on your next opponent.”

With the home crowd at Bill Snyder Family Stadium behind them, expect the K-

State offense to come out of the gates fired up on Saturday and anxious to earn a win.

“It is going to be nice to be able to come back here and play a team in front of ev-

erybody again,” Finney said. “The season is starting to wind down, and we all love and appreciate the fans, so we are just looking forward to a good game.”

Wildcats work to strengthen passing defense

Corbin McGuire
staff writer

K-State, despite losing, took a step forward in its game against the Oklahoma State Cowboys after seemingly taking two steps back in its previous game against the Oklahoma Sooners. The Wildcats lost their second game in a row to the Cowboys in a 52-45 thriller.

The Wildcats started the game in a similar fashion to the previous week’s matchup, getting down 14 points.

The Wildcat defense regrouped and started to make plays from that point on, but in the end, the defense could not do enough to slow down the Cowboys’ offense.

After an Anthony Cantele field goal, Tysyn Hartman intercepted a Brandon Weeden pass. The offense responded with a touchdown to cut the Cowboys’ lead to four. The Wildcat defense kept the momentum by forcing a Cowboys punt. The Wildcats, fueled by Collin Klein, took the lead on the ensuing drive. Cornerback Allen Chapman provided a punch on the next drive by intercepting Weeden and taking it 60 yards for a touchdown, giving the Wildcats a 24-14 lead.

Head coach Bill Snyder said Chapman’s interception was a “very exceptional play on his part,” but that the 502 yards of passing offense from the Cowboys showed a problem that he was a part of.

“We have to get it corrected,” Snyder said. “We just have to be better than that against the pass.”

The Wildcats’ 24 unanswered



Arthur Brown, a junior linebacker, rushes quarterback Brandon Weeden of the Cowboys. Brown has 69 total tackles on the season.

points, however, did not rattle Weeden as he led his offense to points on seven of their next eight drives to make the final score 52-45.

K-State went toe-to-toe with the Cowboys the entire game but could not find a way to the end zone in the final seconds to even the score.

The Wildcats will take on the Texas

A&M Aggies Saturday. Both teams are coming off two straight losses and will be eager to get back on track.

Snyder said in his weekly press conference that the Aggies’ offense is more balanced than both the Sooners’ and Cowboys’.

“They have run the ball well. [Ryan] Tannehill throws the ball very

well – let’s not lose sight of that. He is about a 60-percent thrower and he has thrown for over 2,000 yards,” Snyder said. “They are going to throw the ball, there is no doubt about that. But my guess is that they are going to maintain the balance in their offense, but they are not going to bypass the pass just to run the ball.”

The Aggies, however, will be without Christine Michael, their leading rusher, due to a torn ACL. Snyder said he does not think the injury will change the Aggies approach much.

“I think they utilize both running backs,” Snyder said. “Michael did not have many receptions so I look at it as Cyrus Gray might be a little more versatile in what he does.”

The Wildcats have defended some of the most high-powered offenses in the country; something that Chapman said helps the defense.

“I think we are battle tested, but at the same time it is football,” Chapman said. “You win some games, you lose some games, and it is how you respond to each game.”

The Wildcats are hoping to take another step forward and break their losing streak at home Saturday in order to start positioning themselves for the best bowl game possible. Defensive back Nigel Malone said every game is important but this week means something more.

“Every week is important to come out with a win,” Malone said. “This week especially, just to keep our hopes up for a really good bowl game.”

The game is set for kickoff at 2:30 p.m. at Bill Snyder Family Stadium and will be televised on ABC.

BY THE NUMBERS

Key numbers to think of during Saturday’s game

2

- Collin Klein’s rank among rushing quarterbacks in the country

So far on the season, Klein has rushed for 906 yards and 19 rushing touchdowns. Klein has been able to find this success because teams have been focusing on him running and trying to force him to pass the ball more often. After throwing a career-high 231 yards last week, he is starting to show that he has the ability to pass the ball. If Klein can continue to throw the ball with this kind of success, then it is going to be nearly impossible to stop him and he will continue to have success on the ground.

38

- number of points that Texas A&M averages per game this season

Texas A&M has shown that they are capable of scoring a lot of points in games. With playmakers including Jeff Fuller, Ryan Swope and Cyrus Gray, they have the players that can give defenses fits. The Aggies will test the K-State defense with their ability to both run and pass the football. The Wildcats must get back to playing the defense they were earlier in the season, or they will have another tough game.

71

- number of points by which the Aggies have been outscored in the second half of their four losses

The Aggies have not been able to preserve leads in the second half and it has hurt them this season. The Aggies have been able to get out to big first half leads constantly, only to see them evaporate and end up losing the game. If Texas A&M is going to defeat the Wildcats, the Aggies will have to play much better in the second half than they have thus far this season.

120

- rank of the Texas A&M pass defense, out of 120 teams in the country

The Aggies are the worst team in the country against the pass. They give up an average of 311 yards per game. This may be a huge key as Collin Klein is coming off of a career passing game against the Oklahoma State Cowboys. The Aggies appear to be effective against the run, but those numbers are skewed because teams have been so effective passing the ball against them. Do not expect the Wildcats to completely abandon rushing the ball, but there will be opportunities for the Wildcats to throw the ball.

1022

- number of passing yards that the Wildcats have given up the past two weeks

Landry Jones of Oklahoma and Brandon Weeden of Oklahoma State have each gone for over 500 passing yards in victories over the Wildcats. There are a couple of reasons why this is happening. The defensive line was not able to get any pressure on either quarterback, giving them all day to stand in the pocket and throw the football.

Another reason is that the secondary is giving up way too many yards after the catch. The defense must do a better job of tackling the receivers as soon as they catch it.

Both of these will be key as the Aggies have playmakers on the outside and a good quarterback.

-Compiled by Mark Kern

GAMEDAYGUIDE



K-STATE VS. TEXAS A&M

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WHERE: BILL SNYDER FAMILY STADIUM
TELEVISION: ABC



MATCHING UP

K-STATE RUSH OFFENSE VS. TEXAS A&M RUSH DEFENSE

The Aggies will try to counter K-State's rushing attack with the third-ranked rush defense in the conference. Texas A&M has allowed only 110.2 yards per game on the ground, including just three yards per carry. K-State continues to be paced by Collin Klein, who is averaging almost 80 yards per game after last week's 144-yard, three touchdown performance against Oklahoma State. Klein has 19 rushing scores this season, including 15 in the Wildcats' last five games. He, along with John Hubert, may be too much for the Aggie front seven to handle, but A&M will have a better resistance to the run than Oklahoma State last week.

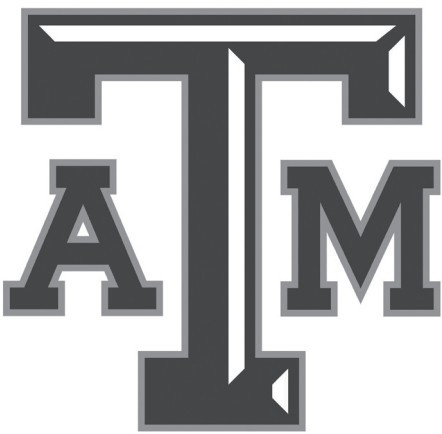
ADVANTAGE: K-STATE



TEXAS A&M PASS OFFENSE VS. K-STATE PASS DEFENSE

The Wildcats have not been much better than the Aggies at stopping the pass. K-State ranks 115th nationally against air attacks. This weakness has been shown in the past two weeks going up against some of the top passing offenses in the country. Texas A&M receivers Ryan Swope and Jeff Fuller have combined for almost 1400 yards and 11 touchdowns. After back-to-back 500-plus yard passing games for Wildcat opponents, it is tough to give K-State's secondary the benefit of the doubt.

ADVANTAGE: TEXAS A&M



TEXAS A&M RUSH OFFENSE VS. K-STATE RUSH DEFENSE

While stopping the pass was impossible for the Wildcats last week, K-State did a great job slowing down the Oklahoma State running game, allowing just 73 yards. This has consistently been one of the best traits of the defense, but it will be challenged on Saturday. Even without Christine Michael, who leads the team with 844 yards and will miss the rest of the season, Cyrus Cray and quarterback Ryan Tannehill have both showed the ability to be effective runners. The injury to Michael gives the Wildcats a small edge.

ADVANTAGE: K-STATE



K-STATE SPECIAL TEAMS VS. TEXAS A&M SPECIAL TEAMS

Tyler Lockett has two kickoff returns for touchdowns this season. The problem is, he is out for the year with an injury to his kidney. Does K-State have another explosive player to consider a special teams threat? The Aggies will find out. Meanwhile, Texas A&M has a dependable kicker in Randy Bullock. Field position will be a large factor on Saturday as well.

ADVANTAGE: NEITHER



K-STATE PASS OFFENSE VS. TEXAS A&M PASS DEFENSE

The Wildcats are not a team that throws the ball regularly, but seeing K-State do so on Saturday shouldn't be a surprise. Texas A&M ranks 120th in the country in pass defense, allowing more than 311 yards per game. Meanwhile, Collin Klein has showed more passing ability as of late, including throwing for a career high 231 yards last week. The Wildcats will be without Tyler Lockett due to injury, but there are still enough capable receivers on the K-State roster to give the A&M secondary problems if Bill Snyder chooses to do so.

ADVANTAGE: K-STATE



INTANGIBLES

Following a heartbreaking defeat by Oklahoma State, the Wildcats are in desperate need to taste victory again. K-State is in line to receive a possible Cotton Bowl invitation, but losing a third straight conference game would likely end those hopes. Texas A&M needs a win as well. The Aggies have yet to reach bowl eligibility and are starting to lose respect as a powerhouse opponent. But in the environment of Bill Snyder Family Stadium, it is always hard to pick a road team.

ADVANTAGE: K-STATE



FINAL SCORE PREDICTION: 31-24 K-STATE

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GAMES TO WATCH

Pac -12 Conference rivals clash in games with major implications



OSU @ TEXAS TECH

Coming off of a thrilling 52-45 victory over K-State last Saturday, the Cowboys will look to continue their run toward a national title as they travel to Lubbock, Texas to take on the Texas Tech Red Raiders.

Quarterback Brandon Weeden threw for 502 yards against the Wildcats as they were able to score just enough to get the victory.

Receivers Tracy Moore and Justin Blackmon were both impressive as the duo combined for over 300 yards receiving and three receiving touchdowns.

However, the Cowboys defense allowed the Wildcat offense, especially quarterback Collin Klein, to move the ball at will against them. They will have to shore this up as they go up against the Texas Tech offense.

After the upset over Oklahoma, it appeared that Texas Tech was going to make some noise for the rest of the season. Now the Red Raiders are at a point where they are going to struggle just to get into a bowl game.

Texas Tech's offense has not been the same over the past two weeks as quarterback Seth Doege has not been on his game. If Doege is on his game, then the Red Raiders are capable of playing with anybody.

After an emotional victory last week, it will be interesting to see if the Cowboys come out flat. With a matchup looming with Oklahoma in a few weeks, there may be an urge to look ahead. The Cowboys must take it one game at a time and not overlook anybody.

In the end, look for the Cowboys to pull out a closer-than-expected victory. Doege will make some plays against a mediocre Cowboy defense, but in the end, Weeden and company will be too much.



NEBRASKA @ PENN STATE

Coming off of a shocking home loss to Northwestern, the Cornhuskers will look to get back on the winning track against Penn State. However, this game may be the last thing on the minds of the Nittany Lions.

With the firing of coach Joe Paterno and the scandal that is taking place at Penn State, the incredible success of the team is being overlooked.

Penn State (8-1, 5-0), is in the driver's seat in the Leaders Division as they have been the surprise of the Big 10 Conference this season.

Much of the Penn State success can be credited to the legs of junior running back Silas Redd. On the season, Redd is averaging just under 110 yards a game. To go with this great rushing attack, the Nittany Lions also have an outstanding defense.

For many years, the defense has been



called Linebacker U, and this year is no different.

Gerald Hodges, junior linebacker, leads the team with 77 tackles and is the leader of a tough defense. Nebraska must find a way to get points in different ways.

Coming off of a shocking 28-25 loss to Northwestern, Nebraska will have to play much better to leave Happy Valley, Pa. with a win.

Against the Wildcats, Nebraska running back Rex Burkhead was only able to rush for 50 yards on 21 carries.

He must have a big game if the Cornhuskers are going to be able to avoid losing two games in a row.

Look for Penn State to come out very emotional with all that has happened in the past few days and get a tough victory to move to 6-0 on the season in conference play.



WASHINGTON @ SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



After leaving USC to become the coach at Washington, Steve Sarkisian has been able to have success against his former school. He will look to quarterback Keith Price to help continue the success.

On the season, Price has thrown for 2,133 yards and 25 touchdowns and has been able to ease the transition from the Jake Locker era. However, in the past two games, Price has not played his best football. Price has thrown five of his 10 interceptions in the past two weeks against Arizona and Oregon. He must limit the turnovers against the Trojans and rely on running back Chris Polk to help control the time of possession.

Andrew Luck has widely been regarded as

the best quarterback in the country. As the season continues, though, another Pac-12 quarterback is making a case to be the best in the country.

Matt Barkley has been outstanding this season. He is coming off of a game against Colorado when he threw a school record six touchdowns. He has teamed up with Robert Woods to form one of the best passing receiving duos in all of the country.

As was the case last week in the SEC, this is not the marquee game in the Pac-12 Conference this week. However, these two teams both have a lot to play for, and Washington could play themselves into the Holiday Bowl if they keep playing well.



OREGON @ STANFORD



This Pac-12 clash has major implications in both the Pac-12 and the National Title races. Stanford is undefeated on the season and ranked third in the country as Oregon enters the game with one loss and ranked sixth.

Oregon is coming off an impressive road victory against a very good Washington team. Since the season-opening loss to LSU, the Ducks have been on fire, scoring 46 points and averaging 510 yards of total offense per game.

The Ducks, led by quarterback Darron Thomas and running back LaMichael James, have given teams all kinds of problems this season. Both have been injured at various points of the season, but when healthy, there is not a more dynamic rushing duo in the country. When James needs a breather, DeAnthony Thomas and Kenjon Barner provide even more playmaking ability from the backfield.

Oregon is going to get their points, and this offense is too explosive to shut down. A key will be if

the Stanford defense can force some turnovers.

As good as the Oregon offense has been, the Stanford offense has been equally impressive.

Stanford comes into Saturday's matchup averaging 48 points and 508 yards per game.

The Cardinal go at it a different way. They play more of a pro-style offense, rather than the spread of the Ducks. Heisman front-runner Andrew Luck is in complete control of the offense. The quarterback seems to be able to play better as the game gets bigger. After throwing an interception against Southern California that gave the Trojans a touchdown lead with just over three minutes left, Luck went right back and led the Cardinal on the tying drive. He then made all the plays in overtime as the Cardinal were able to win in triple overtime.

This promises to be a more exciting game than last week's game of the week. At the end of the day, the Ducks have too much talent on offense, and for that, the Ducks should escape with a close victory.



TEXAS @ MISSOURI



After back-to-back losses to Oklahoma and Oklahoma State, the Longhorns appeared to be going back to a season like last year's. A few weeks later and the Longhorns are in position to contend with K-State for a Cotton Bowl berth.

The Longhorns have found their true identity as a power rushing attack on offense and an opportunistic defense.

The rushing attack, led by freshmen Malcolm Brown and Joe Bergeron, as well as senior Fozzy Whittaker, has done a great job of helping David Ash ease into the starting quarterback role.

The rushing attack will be key as the Longhorns go up against a team in Missouri that is fighting for its bowl eligibility.

The Tigers enter the game with five losses and have upcoming games against Texas and Texas Tech.

This means that this game is potentially for a bowl game, and you can expect the Tigers to play like that.

Quarterback James Franklin is coming off of a good game in a 42-39 loss to Baylor, and will look to continue this strong play.

The Tigers' defense must come to play as the Longhorns are going to try and run the ball as much as possible.

Missouri is in their own style of playoff

game, and for that reason, look for the Tigers to pull the upset over the ranked Texas Longhorns.

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GAMEDAYGUIDE

Klein, while becoming a better passer, still a dangerous runner



Tommy Theis | Collegian
Quarterback **Collin Klein** eludes a defender as he tries to get more yardage on a run against the Oklahoma State Cowboys on Nov. 5 at Boone Pickens Family Stadium.

Weekly Heisman watch

Mark Kern
sports editor

1. ANDREW LUCK,
QUARTERBACK,
STANFORD

Luck has found his way back to the top of the Heisman list, just like he was at the beginning of the season. Just like Trent Richardson could have done last weekend, Luck, with a win over the Oregon Ducks, will all but wrap up the Heisman Trophy. On the year, Luck has thrown for 2,424 yards and 26 touchdowns while completing 71 percent of his passes. Even more impressive is that he has only thrown five interceptions. Luck is in complete control of the offense and is the main reason that Stanford is in the position that they are. The Cardinal enter the matchup ranked third in the country, and in position to play for a national title if any of the two teams ranked ahead them stumble. Oregon will give Luck his toughest test of the season, and if he is able to get the victory, look for Luck to get the trophy.

2. BRANDON WEEDEN,
QUARTERBACK,
OKLAHOMA STATE

Weeden is coming off a game that saw him throw for a school record 502 yards in the 52-45 victory over the K-State Wildcats. On the season, Weeden has thrown for 3,212 yards and 26 touchdowns and has completed 72 percent of his passes. As good as receiver Justin Blackmon has been on the season, Weeden may have found another weapon in Tracy Moore. Moore had over 100 yards and a touchdown against the Wildcats. Right now, there is not a more explosive offense than the Oklahoma State Cowboys', and Weeden is the reason behind it. With a game against Oklahoma looming in the near future, Weeden will have another opportunity to show the country what he can do.

3. TRENT RICHARDSON,
RUNNING BACK,
ALABAMA

The leader going into last week's games dropped in the rankings because the Crimson Tide were unable to defeat the LSU Tigers. It was not necessarily Richardson's fault, as at many times in the game, he was the only guy on the Alabama offense that

could do anything with the ball. The Heisman as much as it is an individual award, is also determined by the success of the team. Richardson still has incredible numbers on the season with 1,078 yards and 17 touchdowns, and with college football, it is impossible to know what is going to happen each week. There is still time for Richardson to get back to the top of the list, especially if the top two candidates falter in their games.

4. LAMICHAEL JAMES,
RUNNING BACK,
OREGON

Despite missing two games, Oregon is still 11th in the country in rushing with 1,061 yards and nine touchdowns. When healthy, James is the most explosive player in the country. In his first game back from injury last week, he rushed for 156 yards in a road victory over the Washington Huskies. With the primetime game of the week against the Stanford Cardinal, he has a chance to show the nation what he is capable of. If the Ducks can get by the Cardinal and James has a monster game, then he could move to the top.

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GAMEDAYGUIDE

Despite youth, freshmen growing into leadership role on team



Sean Frye

Efficient and productive leadership is crucial when it comes to having a successful team, and the Wildcats have been no exception this year. However, while upperclassmen leaders like Collin Klein and Tysyn Hartman have been influential, two freshmen have also stepped up in leadership roles in an attempt to have an impact on their team.

Starting center BJ Finney and wide receiver Tyler Lockett have taken up leadership roles with the team in an attempt to make an impromptu run at an elite bowl game this winter.

"I'm pleased with a lot of the younger players that we have," said head coach Bill Snyder. "They have certainly tried to make their contribution to the overall development of our football team with leadership. It's been good and I appreciate it. It's not an easy thing to do as a young pup."

Before the game against Miami, Lockett stood up in front of the entire team and read a poem that summed up his team's goals and message.

"The poem meant, 'how

bad do you really want it?'" Lockett said. "Some players just don't talk about it, they go out and do it when opportunity knocks, and that's what the poem consisted of. It really showed out there when we played Miami and it carried out as the season went on."

Lockett, who is the third member of his family to suit up for the Wildcats, has handled the pressures of being a heavily relied on freshman well thus far.

"Tyler, collectively throughout the course of the season, has handled things extremely well," Snyder said. "When we were at Miami and hadn't been on a stage like that, he stood up and read a poem that said something very meaningful. He followed it up with a touchdown that game and the rest is history. I'm extremely proud of him."

As for Finney, he is ultimately the leader of the offensive line, as the center is responsible for making the initial blocking assignment calls as the team gets to the line. Considering that the Wildcats favor the run and use a lot of gadget plays, the offensive line making and executing the correct blocking assignments is crucial.

"He's a center, so you know center is probably the most important position on the line," said running back Angelo Pease. "He's doing

a really good job at making his calls and keeping the offensive line on track. It's really impressive considering that he's a freshman. It takes a lot of skill to do that. I'm very impressed with what BJ is doing. BJ is a great guy on and off the field."

In addition to Finney's on-the-field performance, he has also taken up a leadership role off the field as well. He always represents the offensive line during the weekly press conferences and carries himself with certain mannerisms that allow him to be a leader for his team.

"Being a freshman, it can be intimidating to stand up and be a leader," said tight end Travis Tannahill. "He's one of the hardest working guys on the team. He's improved a lot. He's stepped it up off the field and in the film room and has really just improved."

Overall, the two freshmen that have stepped up as leaders have not only had a significant impact on the field, but off it as well. This not only sets the stage for a late season run for the Wildcats, but also provides a core group determined to succeed in the seasons to come.

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Tommy Theis | Collegian

Tyler Lockett, freshman wide receiver, dodges a defender on a double reverse in the first half of the Wildcats' Nov. 5 game. Lockett went on to take the ball 57 yards to set up a K-State touchdown.

K-State's Malone among semifinalists for Jim Thorpe Award



Jared Brown

At the end of every year, the NCAA recognizes its top individual performers in college football. Among these coveted honors, is the award given to the most outstanding defensive back in the nation. The honor is known as the Jim Thorpe Award. This year, one of K-State's own, junior Nigel Malone, is one of 15 players selected as a semifinalist for the award.

Malone is one of head coach Bill Snyder's many junior college transfers to start

for the Wildcat defense this season. He leads a turnover-focused pass defense that is tied for seventh in the nation with 14 team interceptions. Six of those interceptions have come by way of Malone, which has him tied for second in the nation among individuals. The Wildcats have returned three of those 14 interceptions for touchdowns. The defense, as a team, is tied for third in the nation in that category.

Malone's performance for the Wildcat's defense isn't surprising to people who have followed his career since high school. At Sierra High School, in Manteca, Calif., Malone had eight interceptions as a senior and four as a junior. He holds career records at Sierra for interceptions and fumble recoveries.

Before joining the K-State defense this season, Malone played defensive back at the City College of San Francisco (CCSF). While there, Malone recorded three interceptions, nine pass breakups, and one forced fumble. He also returned a block extra point for a two-point conversion score. He was part of a defense that helped CCSF compile a record of 22-2 in the two seasons he played there before transferring to K-State.

Malone's success on defense this year as a Wildcat has fans drawing comparisons of him to former K-State cornerback Terence Newman. In 2002, as a senior, Newman won the Jim Thorpe Award. Malone's numbers in his 2011 campaign are similar, if not better, than Newman's defensive numbers from 2002. In Newman's

Thorpe award-winning year, he totaled five interceptions for 21 total return yards and zero touchdowns through 13 games. Malone already has six interceptions for 69 return yards and one touchdown through only nine games.

For Malone to be recognized as college football's most outstanding defensive back, he will have to beat out several other standout defensive backs. Among those 14 other semifinalists are top candidates such as Mark Barron of Alabama, Morris Claiborne of LSU and Casey Hayward of Vanderbilt. A case can be made that Malone is having a better season individually than each of these three players from the Southeastern Conference.

Barron's numbers at Alabama are comparable to

Malone's numbers in total tackles. Barron currently sits at 46 total tackles this year, which is only five ahead of Malone. However, of those 46 tackles, only 28 of them are solo tackles. Of Malone's 41 tackles, 32 of them have been unassisted. When examining interceptions, Barron's two interceptions fall four behind Malone's six interceptions.

When comparing Malone's stats to Claiborne's at LSU, it is discovered that Claiborne is closer to Malone with four total interceptions but still trails by two in that category. Claiborne also trails Malone in total tackles by eight and, of Claiborne's 33 tackles, 18 of them have been solo.

The last defensive back being considered as one of the top candidates for the Jim Thorpe Award is Casey

Hayward from Vanderbilt. Like Claiborne, Hayward trails Malone in total tackles. Hayward has 36 total tackles, 25 of them being unassisted; both of these numbers lower than Malone's. Like the other two candidates previously stated, Hayward, with five interceptions, also does not have as many interceptions as Malone.

Although K-State's defense has been heavily focused on team this season, it is still important to recognize individual performance on the football field. With players like Malone and others, the defense is shaping up and is looking more like the Bill Snyder defenses of years past.

Jared Brown is a senior in marketing. Please send comments to sports@spub.ksu.edu.

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